

Beaufort Gyre Exploration Project: Dispatch 30: Signs of Life

Chris Linder
August 30, 2005

After watching one of the last CTD casts of the cruise this morning, I walked my familiar circuit around the decks. Volkswagen-sized chunks of melting multi-year ice glowed in the sunlight. Much to my surprise, a trio of glaucous gulls flew overhead, squawking loudly. How long has it been since we have seen seagulls? Three weeks or more have passed. Our trip through the heart of the Beaufort Gyre was a lonely one--aside from a few seals and tiny arctic cod, signs of life were scarce indeed.

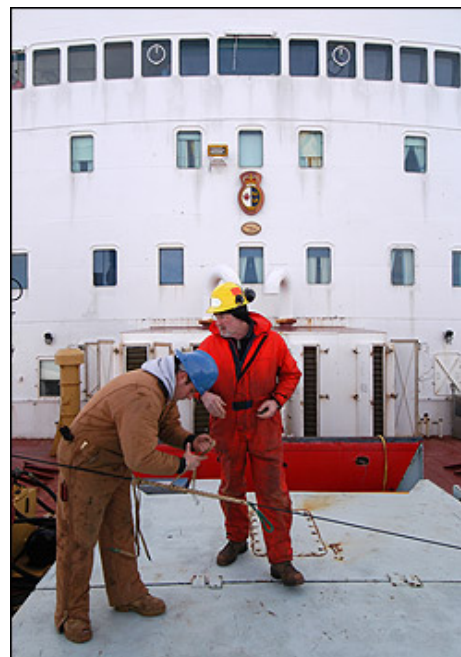
The mooring crew was rewarded with clear, bright sun and lots of open water for the final mooring deployment. Doug Sieberg coordinated the deck operations for the redeployment of the Canadian Basin Observing System (CABOS) mooring that we recovered a few weeks ago (read Dispatch 04 for details). Since this mooring is much shallower water than the BGOS mooring array, the deployment was over in an hour. This was Doug's last mooring deployment--after this cruise he'll be enjoying a well-earned retirement. He was wearing a wide grin as he lobbed a looney (Canadian \$1 coin for our USA readers) into the water after pulling the release. He told me that the lucky token appeases King Neptune and ensures an easy recovery when we come back for the CABOS mooring.

Supper tonight was a special picnic in the crew's dining hall. The chefs made up some Arctic specialties, including Arctic char and Muskoxen burgers that they had purchased in the Inuit town of Cambridge Bay. While eating, the crew was serenaded by the science party, who had dressed up in Gilligan's Isle attire to sing a slightly modified version of the old TV show's theme song. Chief Scientist Sarah Zimmermann then extended her thanks to Captain Potts and the crew for a very successful expedition. In particular she praised the engine department for their tireless efforts to repair the starboard shaft when it failed halfway through the cruise.

The entertainment continued tonight with a photography presentation by your intrepid dispatch writer. I culled 76 of my favorite images that *didn't* make it into the dispatches from the 5,000 or so on my hard drive. Putting that presentation together was a tough job. My very helpful and friendly models from both the science party and crew presented me with some magic moments over the past four weeks. I feel lucky and privileged to have been here to capture them. After the presentation I grabbed my gear and shot another quick 80 images of the setting sun reflecting off of our wake. So, make that 5,080.

It seems like time has both flown and stood still since I sat down to type in that first dispatch. I think anyone who has been on an oceanographic cruise knows what I mean... It feels like you've been at sea forever, you can't wait to get home, and then you finally do and wonder how the cruise went by so fast. Tomorrow we'll be packing up our gear and finishing the last XCTDs of the cruise. Early on Thursday morning we'll say goodbye to the *Louis*, our home for the past 30 days.

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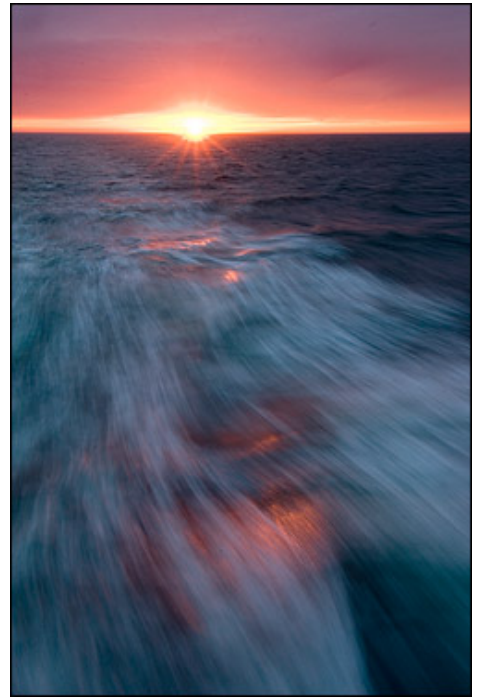
Kris Newhall (left) and Doug Sieberg remove a Yale grip on the CABOS mooring wire.



Bos'n Bob Taylor's work suit.



Doug Sieberg throws his lucky looney to Neptune after the mooring.



Sunset reflections on the *Louis*' wake.

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